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By O. Kay Henderson

Congressman Bruce Braley, a Democrat, is denouncing Republican Senator Chuck Grassley's assertion that the public has "every right to fear" a portion of a health care reform plan that critics say would "pull the plug on grandma."

"I won't name people in congress or people in Washington, but there's some people who think it's a terrible problem that grandma's laying in the hospital bed with tubes in her and think that there ought to be some government policy that enters into that," Grassley told a crowd in Winterset Wednesday. "I'm just on the opposite."

Braley says Grassley has done a "disservice" to Iowa seniors.

"I was shocked, quite frankly, that anybody engaged in bipartisan negotiations on health care reform would reinforce this ridiculous claim that the House bill that I voted on in committee would somehow promote pulling the plug on grandma," Braley says. "It was a ridiculous assertion. It's been debunked by every credible organization, including conservative Republican senators who introduced the provision in the Senate Health Committee."

Democrats in the state legislature last night pointed out Grassley's grandson, Republican State Representative Pat Grassley, voted for a bill that called on the Iowa Department of Public Health to develop an end-of-life counseling program for terminally-ill patients. Grandpa

Grassley told a crowd in Winterset yesterday that those decisions should be made by families and their clergy and government should not be involved.

"You know, I don't have any problem with things like living wills, but they should be done within the family," Senator Grassley said. "We should not have a government program that determines you're going to pull the plug on grandma."

Braley says Grassley's statements should send a signal to the Democratic senator who is leading closed-door negotiations with Grassley and a handful of others, trying to come up with a compromise on health care reform.

"I certainly think it's a wake-up call for him and President Obama that if one of your principle negotiators on the other side is reinforcing these myths about health care reform, you may have your work cut out for you," Braley says.

According to Braley, the whole point of a living will is to inform health care providers how you wish to be treated if you become terminally ill before you become so ill you're unable to express them.

"And Senator Grassley's comment that you should just keep that within the family really is a disservice to those people who end up struggling with those issues in the hospital or in hospice care," Braley says.

Braley is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee which drafted and endorsed its own version of health care reform a couple of weeks ago.